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New York

1917

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Gompers, Samuel, 1850-1924. Address by Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor : under the auspices of the National Security League at Chicago, September 14, 1917. New York : National Security League, 1917. 10 p.

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TECHNICAL MICROFORM DATA

FILM SIZE: 35 mm

REDUCTION RATIO: 11:1

IMAGE PLACEMENT: IA IIA IB IIB

DATE FILMED: 3-3-97

INITIALS: PB

TRACKING # : MSH 21918

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Patriotism Through Education Series
No. 19

Address by

SAMUEL GOMPERS

President of the American Federation of Labor

Under the auspices of

The National Security League

at

Chicago, September 14, 1917



Issued by
THE NATIONAL SECURITY LEAGUE
19 WEST 44th STREET
NEW YORK CITY



MR. CHAIRMAN AND FRIENDS:

I am more gratified this evening at having had the opportunity of listening to that magnificent oration, that wonderful presentation of America's cause in this great struggle, presented by that eminent American, Elihu Root, than I can find words to express. And I beg to assure you that my task has been made much easier by reason of that address. It was my intention to in part trace the developments of this struggle until we were literally dragged into it. It seemed to me that the policy of the German Imperial Government was so set, that do what we would, we could not escape the responsibility of entering into this war.

There is such a thing as humility. There is such a thing as patience. But when some bully will undertake to make an assault upon an innocent, peace-loving man or woman, then patience ceases to be a virtue and humility brings on the brand of cowardice. That was the position in which the United States found itself as a nation by the repeated insults and assaults upon the character and upon the lives of our people, our men, our women and our innocent children.

There is one thought in connection with the atrocious murder of our people in the case of our torpedoed boats. I ask you, my friends, to consider for a moment the fact that the German Ambassador, Count von Bernstorff, a few days before the sailing of the Lusitania, had an advertisement in the newspapers of our country, warning the people of the United States against taking passage on the Lusitania, and advising them that there was danger in their taking passage on that vessel. The impudence of the whole transaction caused a smile to spread over the countenances of the people of the United States. They thought it a hoax, a jest of a very, very somber character, and many of them took passage, and then within a few days the great ship went on her way, where she had a perfect right to go.

Nearly 2,000 souls boarded that vessel before her departure. More than 150 American men and women and chil-

dren were on that vessel when she sailed; she was torpedoed without a moment's warning, and all of them sent to the waters and more than 1,500 human souls, of which more than 100 were American men and women and children, were sent to a watery grave.

The Other Side.

I ask you, my friends, to reverse the position for a moment. Supposing our Ambassador at Berlin, Mr. Gerard, had placed an advertisement in the newspapers of Germany advising the German people against taking passage on a steamer to go to any port that that steamer and her master had a right to go, and supposing further that some American U-boat had sent a torpedo into that merchant ship, and supposing that there had been 100 or more German men, women and children sent to an untimely grave, what do you think the treatment of Gerard would have been at the hands of the Kaiser? Do you think for a moment that there would have been any further parley with Gerard or the Government of the United States? Is it possible to imagine that with Germany's mental attitude Gerard would have been given his passports? Or is it in keeping with the whole policy of "Kultur" that Gerard would have been given his passports? Or is it not in keeping with the whole policy of "Kultur" that Gerard would have paid the penalty with his life?

Surely, it would be untimely and inappropriate did I attempt or did any one attempt to interject any political issue in this campaign of education and Americanism in our country. But I ask you, my friends, whether it is not true that considerable of the opposition to the re-election of Mr. Wilson to the Presidency was based on the accusation that he had too long kept us out of war? It is doubtful if there has been in history a more patient yet courageous man to meet a great emergency than Woodrow Wilson. It was for more than two years that President Wilson pursued his policy, basing his position upon the belief that there was some honor at the core, possibly to be discovered, of the German Imperial Government. He was misled into the belief that there was some honor in German diplomacy. He finally discovered that there

comes a time, and the time did come, when men would be too proud not to fight.

Somewhere, I think it is in Julius Cæsar, when Brutus tells of the opportunity then at hand, I think the lines run something like this:

There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries;
On such a full sea are we now afloat;
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.

Entrance Delayed.

To me it seemed that the entrance of our republic into this conflict had been too long delayed, but as a loyal citizen I yielded to the judgment of the Commander-in-chief of the Army and Navy of the United States. I felt that the time was near at hand when the outrages would increase in such numbers and in such horror that in self respect we would take advantage of the current as it served or we would lose our ventures.

We have entered into this struggle, and there can be no let-up from the time of our declaration of war until either Imperial Germany, with her militarism, shall surrender to the democracies of the world or the democracies shall crush Germany.

We have heard the cries of a few of our people echoing the wishes and the hope of defeated Germany today. I say defeated Germany, although she is not conquered by any means. But Germany is defeated in the objects for which she entered into the war. We have heard an element here, and they are crying out in the wilderness, for it finds no lodgment in the conscience or the hearts of red-blooded men, "Peace! Peace!" Yes, I have seen it printed in newspapers, taken up by other pacifists, so-called, masking under the name of pacifists, but, through ignorance or pro-Germanism, I do not know which, they have declared: "Why not now?" They do declare that which Grant declared during the Civil War, when he said, or as they allege him to have said: "Let us have

peace." The phrase, wonderful and desirable then as now—that declaration was made by General Grant after Lee had surrendered to him.

When the great heart of that captain of our great Civil War gave utterance to that magnificent slogan, "Let us have peace," it was in the hope that all the bitterness in the North and in the South should be obliterated, that the Northern people should help upbuild the people and the industries and the commerce of the South. He then, almost divinely inspired, declared the slogan, "Let us have peace."

So may we in our time—first Kaiserism surrendered or cracked—and then, we, too, will say, "Let us have peace the world over."

"Can Be No Peace."

Let us bear this fact in mind, that Germany and Austria are still fighting on land invaded by them. If we were to consent to peace today, without the surrender of Kaiserism, in all history written in the future the Teutonic forces will be given the credit and the prestige of being the conqueror in this war. There can be no peace, not while there is a Teuton on the soil of glorious France. There can be no peace, and there must not be any peace, until the Teutons are driven back, back, from outraged Belgium.

There cannot be any peace until the people of the world who love peace, who love liberty, and who love peace and liberty more than their own lives, are assured that never again shall it be possible for Germany or Austria, or any other country for that matter, to make such a bloody war upon the freedom of the people. To me it is a subject of much obscurity how it is physically or mentally possible for any man who loves liberty, who is a native or a naturalized citizen of the United States, to make even the slightest manifestation of objection to the prosecution of this war until the final end.

I grieve that many of our poor boys may fall, and God grant that but few shall fall or be hurt, but I ask you, my friends, to think back whether there is any one among you who can trace some distant ancestor who fought in the Revolution to establish this republic and give to the world not only

a new nation, but a new meaning to the rights of man. Is there anyone among you who begrudges the sacrifice of any man who gave his life in order that that great privilege should be established? Who among our men, who among our women, regrets even the sacrifices that were made during our Civil War to abolish human slavery and to maintain the Union? Who among us regrets the sacrifices that were made to rescue Cuba from the domination of Spain and make her an independent republic? Why, all our hearts throb and our whole beings thrill when we can trace one who gave some contributory effort or sacrifice in order that these great achievements should lie as the successes of our country. And so the wonderful achievement of our great Revolution, the tremendous advance to maintain the Union and abolish human slavery, the independence of Cuba, all of them, great and glorious as they are, today the time and opportunity mean the overthrow of Toryism the world over and the establishment of universal democracy among all peoples on the face of the earth.

"Not Tangible."

That which we call freedom, that which we call liberty, are not tangible things. They are not handed to any people on a silver platter. They are principles, they are questions of the spirit, and people must have a consciousness that they not only have the term liberty and freedom, but they must have the power and the right to exercise these great attributes of life.

And if liberty, freedom, justice and democracy are not meaningless terms, they are worth something to us. They are worth anything. They are too priceless to surrender without a struggle, and he who is unwilling to fight for freedom is undeserving to enjoy that freedom.

It is not possible that I can give service in the trenches. It is not possible for our honored Senator, Mr. Root, to give service in the trenches. We cannot carry guns on long marches any more. If I attempted to fight in the trenches it would simply mean that in the course of a few days or weeks I would be a burden rather than a service; so I have made up my mind that I won't volunteer and I cannot be conscripted—

not for military service; but I beg to assure you that it has not been necessary to conscript me. I have volunteered for some character of service. The country needs administrators and I have been told that I am somewhat of an administrator. The country needs organizers and I have been flattered by being told that I am somewhat of an organizer. The country needs advisers, and, pardon me, I have been told that I am not a damn fool. But in any capacity in which our country needs my services, they are at her command.

In the service already are a number of my near and dear relatives. My grandson, nineteen years of age, three months ago volunteered in the aviation service of the United States, and, believe me, when I received that news I grew so fast in stature that I was afraid my clothes would burst off me.

May I suggest this: It is suggested by reason or rather as a result of a great conference which was held in Minneapolis a little more than a week ago; no, it closed a week ago tonight; that so far as possible let every controversial question be laid on the table until after the war is closed. Of course, my friends, I would not have you or anyone else interpret that statement to mean that the human aspiration for a better life can be or will be suppressed; that ought to be encouraged; but shall we array church against church, party against party, religion against religion, politics against politics, nationality against nationality, aye, even the question of raising funds to carry on the war, the bonds that are to be issued? Let us do our share to see to it that Uncle Sam has the fighting men and the men to produce at home and the money with which to carry on the war. Let us defer questions which can be deferred, questions that are likely to divide us in this war, divide any appreciable element of our people in this war; let us remain united and fight it out, no matter how long we fight, until America and America's allies shall prove victorious in the struggle.

"More Than a Name."

To me the term America is more than a name. It is more than a country. It is more than a continent. To me America is the apotheosis, a symbol of the ideas and the ideals for human betterment and human justice among the peoples of the

world. Perhaps it may be strengthened by the hope, but somehow there is a sub-consciousness in me that tells me that when for the first time in the history of the world a Teutonic army shall face the soldiers of the United States with the flag, the Star-Spangled Banner, waving above them, it will penetrate the very souls of the men in the German uniform. In all their fights they have met men carrying the standards that Germany hated. They have never yet come in contact with Old Glory.

I ought to say, my friends, that the policy pursued by the government of the United States in this war, in matters of development and growth and preparation, amazes those who are permitted to know the truth. Some day, my friends, you and I, who may be kept from all the information just now, will know what marvelous America has done within these past few months. And then, too, we have started out on a different line of action than in any previous wars in which we or any of the other countries on the globe have entered. It is to the honor of the committee of which I am chairman, that, as a member of the Advisory Commission of the Council of National Defense, the bill was drafted that provides not only for compensation for injured soldiers and sailors and for their dependents, but also an opportunity of insurance, so that if any of the men come back injured they at least shall have the insurance to give them and their dependents an opportunity that they might live in some degree of comfort, the opportunity of increasing their pay so that they can afford to lay something away, so that when they return they shall have something as a nest-egg to give for themselves or to give to their families. We have tried to formulate a measure that shall relieve for all time the people of our country of the scandals and the injustice of the old pensions system, but taking our experience between the difference of the industrial and employers' liability acts and the substitution of compensation for workmen, so as to apply it to the soldiers and the sailors of Uncle Sam. We hope that the boys who are already in France and the boys who are going over to France shall have their minds free from the worry that their families might possibly go down in the standard of life in their community. We want the boys of Uncle Sam fighting for us to feel that America, great America, will stand by them or those

they may possibly leave behind them. And I am proud to say that that measure passed the House of Representatives yesterday by an almost unanimous vote.

Sacrifices to Come.

We do not know now just exactly what sacrifices we may be called upon to make. Let us pray and hope and work that they may be few, if any at all; but this we feel assured of, from the President down to everyone aiding him and his in the great work of carrying on the war, it is the purpose that the home shall be maintained, that the standard of American life shall not go down, but shall be maintained throughout the war.

We must make it possible that our fighting force shall be provided with every necessity to fight and every means contributing to their subsistence and comfort, and that the American people shall go on in their economic, industrial, social and spiritual life just as well as it is possible to do, and so, when it is necessary to make additional sacrifices, we shall—you, and you, and you—the people of Chicago, the people of Illinois, the people of the United States, stand as one solid phalanx of the manhood and the womanhood of the people of our country, of our republic, united, determined to stand by our cause and our gallant allies until the world has been made safe for freedom, for justice, for democracy, for humanity.

THE NATIONAL SECURITY LEAGUE

is a non-political, non-partisan league of American men and women who are earnestly working for PATRIOTIC EDUCATION AND UNIVERSAL MILITARY TRAINING AND SERVICE.

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